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"I THINK THE MEMBERS OF THE OAS HAVE MADE IT VERY CLEAR THAT MARXIST-LENINISM AND THE SOVIET PRESENCE IS NOT A MATTER WHICH IS ACCEPTABLE TO THE PEOPLE OF THE HEMISPHERE": Reply Made by the President (Kennedy) to a Question Asked at a News Conference, April 24, 1963⁴⁵

I know there is a good deal of concern in the United States because Castro is still there. I think it is unfortunate that he was permitted to assume control in the 1950's, and perhaps it would have been easier to take an action then than it is now. But those who were in positions of responsibility did not make that judgment.

Now, as to what the present situation—we have, as you know, without going through the entire list, we have—and the other countries of the free world have—cut free world trade in the last 2 years from \$800 million to \$80 million. We are working with the OAS to set up an organization which will limit the movement of potential guerrillas in and out of Cuba. We have—the OAS have almost diplomatically isolated Castro in this hemisphere. I think the members of the OAS have made it very clear that Marxist-Leninism and the Soviet presence is not a matter which is acceptable to the people of the hemisphere. We have been working through the Alliance for Progress to prevent a repetition of the Cuba incident. We have made it very clear we would not permit the movement of troops from Cuba to another country for offensive purposes. We maintain surveillance. We do a good many things.

Now, coming down to the question which is rather sidestepped, that is, if the United States should go to war in order to remove Castro. That nettle is not grasped, and it would seem to me that we have pretty much done all of those things that can be done to demonstrate hostility to the concept of a Soviet satellite in the Caribbean except take these other steps which bring in their wake violence, and may bring a good deal of worldwide difficulty. If they are advocating that, then I recognize that as an alternate policy, but if it is merely a policy which says that we should do something without defining it, except perhaps as I have said, unleashing the exiles, which cannot do the job, it seems to me that we deserve in a question of this importance a good deal more precision in our prescriptions for its solution.

⁴⁵ The reply printed here is taken from p. 345 of *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1963*.